

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1 and 6 and cancel claims 7 and 9, without prejudice or disclaimer, as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A surface treatment method for ~~treating~~removing a passive film on a surface of a metal material ~~by prior to heating said metal material with a temperature-maintaining process~~, said surface treatment method comprising:

~~removing a passive film, wherein the removing comprises heating together said metal material and an amino resin~~raising temperature of said metal material, which has not been subjected to a passive film removing treatment, to a temperature at which the surface treatment is performed in a place in which amino resin is present, and during the raising of the temperature, removing the passive film by C, N and H which are liberated from the amino resin;

~~wherein the heating decomposes the amino resin.~~

2. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said amino resin is applied to said surface of said metal material prior to heating said metal material.

3. (Original) The surface treatment method according to claim 2, wherein said amino resin is applied to said surface of said metal material by a solvent.

4. (Withdrawn) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said amino resin is not applied to said surface of said metal material and wherein said amino resin is placed in a heat treatment furnace together with said metal material to heat said metal material.

5. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein melamine resin, urea resin, aniline resin, or formalin resin is used as said amino resin.

6. (Currently Amended) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said surface of said metal material is modified by forming a hardened layer or a compound layer on said surface of said metal material subsequently ~~to heating said metal material~~ to removing the passive film.

7. Cancelled

8. (Currently Amended) The surface treatment method according to claim 6, wherein
nitriding or carburizing is performed.

9. Cancelled